GLOBALISATION OF WHAT? POWER, KNOWLEDGE AND NEOCOLONIALISM

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Introduction: What precisely is being globalised?

The intense discussions in academia concerning globalisation that have taken place over the past decade have matured and extended their reach and implication. Globalisation is now a language and process that reaches into the discursive realm of media reporting and political rhetoric, shaping and creating realities as it does so. Amongst the competing and contested languages and debates, two broad camps, of sceptics and enthusiasts, can be discerned.

A further layer of complexity over the implications of globalisation has been opened up by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (2001), together with the profusion of works of commentary and dispute that have followed on its publication (e.g. Passavant & Dean, 2004). It is into this realm of debate that I want to make tentative steps in the course of this chapter, which does not attempt to grapple in depth with Hardt and Negri's thesis, but to work around some of the underlying themes that are raised in the juxtaposition of globalisation debates and those concerning both the contemporary nature of imperialism and its relationship to the processes of globalisation. As the central concern of Jan Nederveen Pieterse's important work *Globalization or Empire?* (2004), the intersection of these two areas is proving a fruitful direction for current discussion of some central themes in political sociology. This chapter is, therefore, a small contribution to the linking of two debates, rather than a full

exposition of either, and a suggestion that knowledges, and the nature of knowledges and their validity claims, are areas that may benefit considerably from greater exposition and theoretical treatment. When knowledge is power, then what counts as knowledge is of vital importance in social relations. It is the argument concerning the legitimacy of power and knowledge raised by globalisation as it is experienced in social life that concerns this chapter.

To explore these issues, I shall focus attention on some of the broader implications of current globalisation practices and trends. The chapter is intended to consider what lies beneath the surface of the phenomena, and to reveal some of the assumptions that all too readily get passed over in the usual concentration on the events themselves. Hence my initial question in the chapter title: "The Globalisation of What?" Just exactly what is it that is being globalised, that we are seeing arise as a global phenomenon? To address this, it is worth reviewing a number of more widely used descriptions of globalisation and examining both what they reveal and, perhaps even more valuably, what they obscure and omit.

Globalisation is …

Defining terms in such a fraught debate is always difficult, but we may usefully approach issues through the much referenced definitions provided by some of the most widely quoted sources. For Anthony Giddens, writing at the start of the debates on globalisation, the earliest points of recognition that require the use of a neologistic buzzword are those that draw attention to the transgeographical nature of socio-political life: "… the intensification of worldwide social relationships which link distant places in such a way that local happenings are

shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens, 1990, p. 64).

In one sense, this might be thought of as no more than a re-imagining of the internationalist dreams of the nineteenth-century labour movement and the rise of an international proletariat to counter the internationalisation of capital. But Giddens insists that this phenomenon was one of a new era of capitalism, bound up, not in the pre-passport era of steam travel, but in the automated and technologically driven later twentieth century, an era in which the technological capacity of the age was equal to the imaginations of its power brokers.

This theme is further developed in Waters's suggestion that the distinction to be understood is that the physicality of geography is no longer the barrier it may have been in the past: "A social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding" (Waters, 1995, p. 3).

Further, it must be noted that this process is not merely one of technical changes, but of a concomitant change in the consciousness of those globally affected by these processes. This latter point, of people's increasing awareness of the changes, hints at an ambiguous, but overall somewhat positive, potential in globalisation. Its own internal contradictions create the possibility for the release of, or creation of, emancipatory dialogues from below – if the "people" can become sufficiently aware of the implications of these social processes.

Indeed, the tension between images of globalisation from above and globalisation from below have become essential themes of much of the dialogue surrounding globalisation over the past decade. The emergence of grassroots activist critiques of neo-liberal globalisation, such as the World Social Forum (see its web-site at

http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/), with its annual global gatherings, accompanied by regional activist forums, point towards the salience of this analysis of globalisation. Notably these activist critiques, broadly sympathetic to the wider range of activism grouped sociologically under the banner of the New Social Movement [NSM] as extensively analysed by Arturo Escobar (see Escobar, 2000), have also generated a new wave of more classically left critiques, whether self-defined as Maoist, Marxist-Leninist or other (see, for example, the World People's Resistance Movement [WSF] at http://www.wprm.org). These latter groups revert explicitly to a more conventionally recognisable anti-capitalist stance, highlighting capitalism's historic globalising tendency and the need for a counter-movement with similarly expansionist aims of internationalist solidarity, even when particular actions and resistances (revolutionary activities) are locally situated. The re-emergence of classical Marxist debates, complete with complex factional claims and counter-claims, re-energises the nineteenth-century perspectives suggested above. We also see here the necessary echoes of a series of debates within political sociology of the possibility of, and future of, the very idea of emancipation in the context of a globalised realm: a debate mapped out in the collection entitled *Emancipations, Modern & Postmodern* (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992) and still a vital, ongoing and vibrant focus of discussion (e.g. Burbach, 2001; Venn, 2006).

The detail of the conflicts between the two paradigmatic forms of grassroots activity – over whether the WSF's activity, for example, is merely reformist counter-revolutionary, or whether it exhibits a novel or postmodern form of political activism and engagement – need not detain us here for too long. However, these arguments point towards a fundamentally important issue,

which lies at the heart of this chapter. The challenge of globalisation is not just one of making adjustments to contemporary trade arrangements, capital flows, or political arrangements. Nor is it limited to confronting, or accommodating to, the political hegemony of nation states and their alliances, and the strategies and tactics necessary to gain greatest leverage or advantage in these political relations. Rather, there is an epistemological challenge being highlighted under the present conditions that we call globalisation. Knowledge and its grounds for legitimation, linking through to values and therefore to ideological justification, are as much a matter of contest as any physical arrangements or geographical delimitation.

Returning to our understandings of globalisation, Beck distinguishes a number of processes at work within the complexity of phenomena given the catch-all description of globalisation. He gives a definition of globalisation as: "… the *processes* through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks" (Beck, 2000, p. 11).

More importantly, Beck makes a conscious distinction between globalisation and two other associated but, as he outlines them, dissimilar ideas: "globalism" ("the view that the 'world market' is now powerful enough to supplant political action") and "globality" ("from now on nothing that happens is a local event").

Although Beck's definition has the ring of authenticity to it, and has the advantage of alerting us to the complex dynamics and ambivalence of globalisation and its variant phenomena and readings, it must be countered that, when considered in terms of power and knowledge, the division of globalisation into component parts risks becoming insufficiently clear about the interweaving of globalisation and exploitation. That is, it delinks the technical processes,

which may be described as the mechanisms of globalisation, from their social and political components. Put another way, Beck succeeds in isolating the technologies of globalisation from the social forces that shape and form them. Sufficient work exists on the social construction of technologies to alert us to the fact that this delinking results in a dehistoricised and depoliticised narrative, justifying the outcomes without questioning their basis in political process and the exercise of social, political and economic power. Indeed, it is important to recognise that, as a process, globalisation is itself a technology and therefore must be analysed with the same scrutiny as any other technology, not treated as a determinist force with its own predetermined teleology.

Reverting to the immediate discussion of globalisation, this process of dehistoricisation fails particularly to express the history of colonialism that underpins transnational action in the economic field. Globalism and globality, as defined above, are inextricably part of Beck's globalisation, not distinguishable from it, because these phenomena are both interdependent and causally interrelated in complex entanglements. Moreover, in the context of current debates, these points of view are employed by various actors to justify one another. Separating them, even if only for scholarly or heuristic clarity, can serve dangerously to obscure the importance of the intertwining of these processes within an historical and political set of deliberate actions. The agency required to bring about globalisation is part of its identity, not separate from it.

It can therefore be argued that processes of globalisation and the perspectives of globalism and globality are also declarations of particular epistemological assumptions. In order to arrive at such perspectives and interpretations of the present era, certain knowledges must be assumed and shared. Globalisation and knowledge are therefore

intimately linked: globalization makes presumptions about the world and the story of a particular historiography implicit within it. By knowledge, of course, I mean here an epistemology: not just the things we know, but the assumptions that lead us to that knowing; the ways in which we understand knowledge itself; the boundaries which govern what is acceptable and valid knowledge.

It is therefore germane to consider implications of globalisation in terms of ways of interpreting the world, of our understanding of histories and destinies - where we have been and where we might be going - that go along with it. In the political context, the ordering and valuation of knowledge may be of greater import than the socio-economic globalisation to which much of the political concern is directed. When interpreted in terms of knowledge, globalisation emerges, not simply as a problem of socio-geography and the ordering of economic and cultural processes, but as an excuse and a justification for the continuation of some very destructive forms of exploitation.

Globalising knowledge

In this vein, it is appropriate to draw attention to a couple of definitions which point us in a clearer direction as to what it is that is being globalised. Firstly, Barker (extending Robertson, 1992) notes that: "Globalization is constituted by a set of processes which are intrinsic to the dynamism of modernity and as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness as a whole" (Barker, 1997; as reprinted in Benyon & Dunkerly, 2000, p. 42).

Secondly,

> … globalization is a direct consequence of modernization. The epochal transformation of social structures and ideas that began in Western Europe has had as one of its most important consequences the spread of key aspects of modernity to encompass the entire globe, particularly a world capitalist economy and the system of sovereign states. (Beyer, 1992, p. 3)

Both these explorations point towards the central observation that not everything is being globalised. In fact, it is a very particular set of practices and arrangements that is being globalised. But at the same time, the processes of globalisation are universal in their reach. It is in this vein that we can see Hardt and Negri's exploration of "empire" as particularly pertinent. Significantly, their emphasis is on the deterritorialising nature of imperial sovereignty because of its multilayered, one might almost say totalising, complexity. Whilst not everything is being globalised, the globalisation described by "empire" encompasses human experience to the exclusion of any notion of an "outside" or an exterioriority. "In this smooth space of Empire, there is no *place* of power – it is both everywhere and nowhere. Empire is an *ou-topia*, or really a *non-place*" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 190). Again, the emphasis here is not on the territorialised spaces of globalisation, but on the non-geographicality of the underlying power structures enacted by the globalised hegemony of certain exclusive knowledges. The question then arises: what is being lost or delegitimised in the hegemony of "empire"?

To clarify: keeping within the context of power and knowledge indicated in the title of this chapter, the "increased flow" apparent under globalisation looks to be

a very one-way channel. Globalisation of knowledge is fundamental to the creation of "empire" and is a pervasive process, expanding one set of epistemological assumptions to incorporate and subordinate all other ways of knowing. The two definitions of globalisation quoted above are illustrative of a wide body of writing exploring and exposing how the transnational increase in flows of goods and services that characterises globalisation is carried, at least in part, on a universalisation of a set of assumptions and narratives which are understood to be the cornerstones of European modernity. So what are these characteristics?

Modernity has been built on the legacy of the European Enlightenment, with its grand utopia of a meaningful history, universal civilization, and the possibility of progress. These ideals have been expressed in a range of ideas, such as the cumulative truth of scientific knowledge, of history as a developmental progression from the primitive to the civilised, of secular reason and rationality overcoming superstition and magic as the means of understanding what is real. Whilst Western academics debate whether or not these grand narratives are still valid currency in the conditions of gross material surplus in the post-industrial nations of the "global North", processes of globalisation act to universalise these narratives across the planet. Regardless of whether or not we are at the "end of history", it is hard for most critical thinkers to conceive of a future outside these narratives of modernity.

Thus, even the common narratives of emancipation and resistance emanating from within the centre are structured within the dominant frameworks that have justified globalisation's colonial past.

My argument is therefore that despite, or even because of (but that opens up another set of arguments beyond the immediate scope of this chapter), the scepticism towards

grand narratives in the West, one of the more hidden processes of globalisation is the diffusion of these aspects of modernity as global norms. Globalisation, then, is more than just a descriptive term for a set of ambiguous processes; it is a powerfully normative term. It acts as a master frame, suppressing all other possibilities as simply not credible or viable. In this sense, then, globalisation is akin to the processes of empire

As a momentary diversion, one could suggest further that globalisation, based on the existence of transnational actors, indicates that there must also exist transnational communicative codes. The universalisation of key narrative aspects of modernity acts as the medium by which such transnational actors can be created, beyond the limitations of particular cultural frames: thus supporting the imperial code of globalisation.

So, to summarise the plot so far: focusing on the power of knowledge in globalisation leads us to suspect that globalisation is more than just an economic phenomenon, and more than an increase in the depth and intensity of economic and cultural flows. It represents the universalisation of influence of a particular understanding of the world; that understanding being given the shorthand of modernity.

It is for this reason that Ashis Nandy, one of India's foremost cultural commentators, has described globalisation from the perspective of the recipients (more frequently simply referred to as its "victims") as a "modernist cultural totalitarianism" (see Buell, 2000). The answer to the question in the title, "What is being globalised?", must be, "A framework of knowledge derived from a particular socio-geographic history: that of Western Europe". It is certainly not the knowledge of the world one encounters when speaking with those outside of the beneficiaries of dominant markets, whether in First or

Third Worlds. Global communications technology certainly provides the potential for anyone to have a web presence anywhere in the world, but we must also acknowledge that, language exclusivity aside, the data flow is hardly symmetrical between the global North and the global South. (This is even disregarding the intergovernmental treaties that exist to formalise the inequality of these exchanges.)

Globalisation and history

It is vital to stress at this point therefore that globalisation is not a "natural event". It is not an ahistorical happening that takes place within a cultural and political vacuum. It is part of an ongoing set of processes, mapped into the very idea of history that lies at the heart of Western narratives of self-identity. It is a corollary of the particular European chronicle of a meaningful history, with its narrative of progress from primitive to civilised, from tradition to modernity.

As such, the current wave of globalisation can be seen - as both Robertson (1992) and Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (1999) point out - as an integral part of the ongoing historical relations of European expansionism, starting in the fifteenth century with the "voyages of discovery". However, the part of the jigsaw missing from both Robertson's and Held et al.'s depictions is that European global expansion has historically taken the form of imperialism (conquest and direct political control from the metropolis) or colonisation (establishment of immigrant colonies mimicking the metropolis, supported by slavery or indentured labour), resulting in colonialism (the condition of subjection of those experiencing imperial rule). Therefore, in a globalised world of increasing commodity and information flows, the flow of power and

knowledge is almost entirely one-way, because such flows are governed by power relations stemming from the reality of historical precedents; to be more explicit, a history of global relations structured by the legacy of empire and colonialism.

Examining this historical legacy again from the point of view of the recipient, we can usefully turn to a description from the academic and activist Vandana Shiva:

> Globalization has occurred in three waves. The first wave was the colonization of America, Africa, Asia, and Australia by European powers over 1,500 years. The second imposed a Western idea of "development" during the postcolonial era of the past five decades. The third wave of globalization … is known as the era of "free trade". For some commentators, this implies an end to history; for the Third World, it is a repeat of history through recolonization. The impact of each wave of globalization is cumulative, even as it creates discontinuity in the dominant metaphors and actors. And each time a global order has tried to wipe out diversity and impose homogeneity, disorder and disintegration have been induced, not removed. (Shiva, 1998a, p. 105)

We can call this recolonisation a neocolonialism, or a new form of colonialism. I use the term to indicate that what is being established today is not just a set of economic arrangements, but the cultural hegemony of modernity. Where colonialism was the condition of the subjection of those whose lives were shaped by the institutions of imperialism, neocolonialism can be used to describe the condition of those whose lives are shaped by the institutions of economic globalisation. Nor is it entirely

synonymous with Hardt and Negri's "empire", for the reasons outlined above.

If we accept that the current situation merits the description of another form of colonisation, then we should also bear in mind the understandings that arise from studies of the impact of colonialism. This not only affects those colonised, but also has a dehumanising effect on the colonisers. Neocolonialism projects a myth of the ultimate superiority of the social and political institutions, the economic arrangements, the lifestyles and the values of the global North.

Viewed exclusively from the point of view of the former imperial nations, current events could appear to vindicate the entire history of domination if, on reaching independence, the former colonies sought nothing more than to replicate the value systems of the former masters. We, as those who dominate today's globalisation processes, bow down to the notion that the form of organisation found in today's global North is the best way of organising human society; that it is the one true path to salvation.

The power relations of globalisation

Through the second half of the twentieth century, the relationship between the industrial nations of the Euro-American North-West and the former colonial nations has been shaped by the ideology of developmentalism: the transfer of expertise, knowledge and production techniques from the developed to the "developing". The unspoken assumption is of the ignorance of the primitive and the traditional, cured by generous donation from the imperium. No matter that the immiseration of generations is inseparable from the history of exploitation. For our contemporary version of the technology transfer, the

epistemological or knowledge transfer of globalisation, this means the globalisation of "… priorities, patterns and prejudices of the Occident" (Shiva, 1998b, p. 169). In a context of a history of not just uneven, but asymmetrical, power relations, globalisation can only mean the imposition of one set of norms and priorities on another.

Whilst not wanting to equate globalisation exclusively with capitalism, it nevertheless remains valid that the primary source of and almost exclusive basis for value in contemporary Western society is both economic and utilitarian. (One could add that this is necessarily so, given the narrative of secularisation in modernity.)

Thus it can also be argued that the discourses of globalisation and sustainable development operate together to narrow the range of possible futures; to shape processes and options for social change towards the "smooth functioning" of technocratic solutions to the management of social change at a global level (Williams & Ford, 1999). Hence, because of the reality of unequal power relations, Beck's distinction between globalisation and globalism collapses. Globalisation may be a minor irritant in the context of the North but, for the majority of the world's population in the nations of the global South, it is no more than a new wave of colonialism.

We see this explicitly when we examine commentaries on globalisation that originate outside the world of Western academia. For example, K. S. Krishnaswamy writes: "There is manifestly a sympathetic relationship between privatisation and globalisation, since both are predicate on the principle of 'efficient' resource use – 'efficient' that is to say, in the free market sense of private benefit" (Krishnaswamy, 1993, p. 94). He goes on to argue that: "The most disadvantageous aspect of globalisation is the clear loss of independence in policy-making" (p. 108). The language of economic globalisation does not simply

describe an existing phenomenon, but goes further, and forecloses any options in the future. It chases any vision of other possible social and value arrangements into the realms of fantasy: e.g. the primary concern of social change becomes not what possibilities exist, but how to achieve a predetermined end. The problematic of the development process is no longer conceived of as a self-guided and self-determined search for better ways of living, but as a problem of finding the quickest and easiest transition to a liberal market economy.

One illustration of the way in which globalisation becomes this crude globalism (to refer back to Beck's distinction) can be seen through the work of Philip McMichael (1996). He argues that the decentralisation of state power (a key factor in globalisation processes) also leads inevitably to the centralisation of power in the economics of neo-liberal capitalism, as the conventional checks and balances that have provided other means of assigning cultural value to social goods, services and activities decline in reach.

So the core values originating within the historically powerful and dominant nations – i.e. the present and former colonial powers (in which we must include the USA – are spread by means of conquest and trade. More importantly, these values are diffused throughout the reach of these empires; that is, these values become internalised by those who start out on the receiving end, and become in turn the basis of the value system of the elites of those nations, who can reinforce their own power over their subjects. Unfortunately, this trickle-down is an ultimately unsustainable process that leads, not to an overall raising of standards and conditions, but to increasing divergence of wealth and opportunity.

Neocolonialism, knowledge and power

What does neocolonialism do? Firstly, it establishes a hierarchy of values, privileging the experiences and insights of the coloniser over those of the colonised. Globalisation can be seen as a process of hierarchical structuring of global power relations. The value of cultures, traditions, processes and social relations is measured by their distance from the notional centre.

This distance is measured not in physical terms, but in both socio-cultural terms and in temporal terms.

- Socio-cultural distance indicates the ease with which the social and cultural institutions, including governance, can be incorporated in the dominant economic and political forms of Western free market capitalism and liberal democracy.

- Temporal distance indicates how far in time a particular culture is from the "now" of Western capitalism. This presupposes that nations and cultures are interpreted within a developmental and primarily linear notion of history. Western "civilisation" is naturally the most "advanced" on the timeline. Note also that this process is most pernicious in its closure of the future. If there is a future, it is limited to the current reality of the dominant West.

But just when all looks entirely bleak, we can acknowledge that the obverse of dominant codes and spaces is that they always carry, within and of themselves, their own resistances. Resistance and intercultural

exchange are increasingly vibrant. Because channels are created for neocolonial domination, these conduits can be subverted or used as counter-channels. There are always counter-currents and, even more important, ways which do not try and oppose the overwhelming force, but operate on different sets of values entirely.

The positive side of globalism has been the celebration of plurality and the rediscovery and celebration of hybridity. It is not to be underestimated – the upside of the recognition of socio-cultural distance as partly illusory in a world of modern communications, etc. However, the presence of hybrid forms and intercultural exchanges is no guarantee of justice. Music of protest can be sidetracked as a process of commodification of the "other", in which the exotic is celebrated, but only as filtered through and commodified by the economic and cultural filters of the dominant partner. Some examples illustrate the ambiguity of counter-currents.

"World music" ceases to be an exchange and becomes just another commodity for Sony in their worldwide empire. "Ethnobotany" identifies the traditional knowledge of healing plants, etc., but its downside is that it reduces this knowledge to an object of capitalist ownership. Even dissent is packaged and reinterpreted in recognisable forms, thus rendering it as familiar "opposition", which challenges only within recognisable narrative categories. For example, women's activism to prevent deforestation in the Himalayas (the Chipko movement) has long ceased to be evaluated in terms of their own understandings of struggle, but is (re)interpreted as an example of either a struggle over ownership of the means of production or as a form of deep ecology. (In my own research elsewhere, I have indicated that witnesses suggest that it is both and neither, and has many other

dimensions not seen as relevant: e.g. about sacred space, meaning, magic, etc.)

Conclusions: Pathways to plural futures

For us, as citizens of the privileged global North, the damage inflicted by neocolonialism on our own integrity is less obvious. If we just look to those whom we are conventionally inclined to view as the victims of globalisation for solutions, we risk missing the damage that neocolonialism does to us, shaping us to foreclose our vision of a worthwhile life and to reduce it simply to a problem of how to make the most money with the least effort.

Ashis Nandy's vital insights and extensive analyses of the impact of colonialism show us that the victimiser is dehumanised by participation in the extension of these power games. The knowledge/epistemological assumptions of globalisation repeat and reinvent the same distorting patterns to be seen in colonialism, according to Nandy (1983). He argues that colonialism deforms masculinity into aggression, whilst subjugating the perspectives of women, children and age. It places "other" societies into categories of the feminine and the childish, reading these as either permanently inferior or acceptable only when they conform to the styles of the dominant narrative.

Neocolonialism urges us to believe our own myths of superiority: that we have discovered the "right way to live"; that we are the most successful civilisation, the best country in the world. As Buell points out, according to Gandhian practice, "… full liberation means not only healing the oppressed but also the oppressors of the consequences of their oppression" (Buell, 2000, p. 313).

The struggle for freedom in the power relations of global neocolonialism requires not simply supporting claims for all nations to have equal rights or representation in the global marketplace, though this is necessary. It requires finding ways and possibilities that step outside the limitations of the framework altogether.

What interests me, in terms of understanding oppositions and resistance to the power of globalisation, is that traditions do exist for which the narratives of secular salvation have little relevance. They work through weakness, not by taking hold of the power wielded by the centre or the dominant, but by ignoring it and making it non-pertinent. There are possibilities of shaping possible futures, but they do not lie within the conventional remit of narratives of modernity. These futures take many fluid forms, and often are not even seen as pertinent movements or paths of liberation, since they fall outside those channels defined by modernity as possible forms of dissent.

For example, the work of Nandy and others (see, for example, Lal, 2000; Nandy, 2004) points towards what was originally called a critical traditionalism. The term is oxymoronic within the terms of the critical hermeneutic of modernity, and deliberately so. Nandy's central argument, from an Indian perspective, is that India is neither Western nor Non-Western; it is Indian. The fatal flaw of colonial and neocolonial visions is that they are only able to conceive of alternatives within their own existing cognitive frameworks. Critical and dissenting traditions are legitimised within the hegemony of modernity. However, this results in the paradox that only those courses of action that do work within the narratives of modernity are recognised as legitimate possibilities of dissent. Other approaches, or narratives, can be labelled as anachronistic, romantic, idealistic, etc. Hence, we also see close parallels between a whole range of contemporary dissent and

dissidence, whether social postmodernism, post-colonial criticism, or multicultural feminism (West, 1990).

To summarise: understood in terms of power, globalisation offers a narrative of secular salvation rooted in a uniquely Western European philosophic religious tradition, reinterpreted through a variety of political forms through the ages. Through its universalising extension of the founding motifs of modernity, globalisation appears to hold out a promise of salvation by means of the redemption narratives of science, reason, progress and nationalism. Technically speaking, it is a form of soteriology, a redemption myth. Unfortunately, it is one that has taken material form in exploitation and domination. The nature of the narratives by which salvation is secured demands a greater or lesser degree of submission. Since the hypermasculinity distorting the centre is based on the celebration of aggression, conflict is therefore a function of the process, not an unfortunate by-product. Closer interrogation may even serve to make us suspicious of the soteriological motif itself. But perhaps more modestly, by taking seriously voices from outside the West, we might understand how the myth of our own superiority has damaged us, as well as the "obvious" victims of neocolonialism; so that, as we seek to make a better world, we may start by addressing our own profligacy and question our own institutions and lifestyles, before deciding on the proper course of action for others.

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